Spring 2011

Fusion Spring 2011

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The Origin of GAY

MARGARET CHO

LGBTQ

Campus Climate

Gender? It’s a Myth

Becoming Jake Nash

VOICE IN THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

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FROM THE EDITOR

Raytevia Evans Editor-in-Chief

I was ambitious and confident when I received the Fusion managing editor position in fall 2010. I was a determined fool when I applied for editor this semester.

Don’t take this as regret because it is nothing of the sort. I simply underestimated the work that needed to be done. Despite the responsibilities that piled up in front of me — including class assignments — this staff believed there were important stories on and around this campus that were going unheard. Like any other magazine staff, we were determined to shed light on the lives and stories that slip between the cracks or are often overlooked.

The production of this issue of Fusion — and every magazine imaginable, I suppose — was grueling hard work. However, seeing the final product come together fills me with complete satisfaction, knowing we covered topics that are important and of interest to our audience. From the LGBTQ “climate” of Kent State (page 15), to the cover story on the life of Jake Nash, the staff felt like these stories needed to be told. Together, the staff has put together a product that we are extremely proud of, specifically because it was a learning experience every step of the way.

During this journey, I learned a lot from staff members as well as the people we came in contact with during interviews and photo shoots. And for that reason, I am a better journalist than I was last year, and I am grateful for the opportunity. As editor, I received a figurative VIP seat to watch the LGBTQ community interact with each other and see how they embrace everyone else, even when they are questioned about or frowned down upon because of their sexuality or the way they live their lives. For me, that was an inspiration, and I hope the contents of this issue teach you something new and inspire you as much as this community inspires me.
The Kids Are All Right (2010)
Starring: Annette Bening
Julianne Moore
Mark Ruffalo
Nic (Bening) and Jules (Moore) are family members that rarely grace us on the big screen. They are longtime partners and mothers of a college-bound daughter and a sporty but apathetic son. Nic and Jules’ daughter Joni (Mia Wasikowska) and son Laser (Josh Hutcherson, all grown up) are both products of artificial insemination. The couple is completely thrown when Joni and Laser decide to contact their father, Paul, an organic garden-growing restaurateur with a motorcycle.

Paul forms a relationship with Joni and Laser, but their moms are not as willing. Through mishaps, forbidden motorcycle rides and skateboard stunts, Nic and Jules reluctantly meet him. The mothers reevaluate what “family” really means and whom it encompasses.

The Kids Are All Right is a must-see LGBT movie for its big-name actresses playing the rare character types of two lesbian moms. The film is a fresh take on the heartwarming family dramedy and won a Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture — Musical or Comedy. Bening was awarded a Globe for Best Actress. The film earned four Oscar nominations, including a nod to Bening for Best Actress in a Leading Role.

Milk (2008)
Starring: Sean Penn
Josh Brolin
Emile Hirsch
James Franco
Sean Penn shines in the role of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man to be elected to California office. The film opens with footage of the 1978 announcement of Milk’s assassination, forewarning that there will not be a happy ending in the story. Milk follows the politician, gay activist and business owner through his rocky relationships. He ran multiple campaigns and finally earned a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Milk’s tribulations and triumphs are marked by his calm sense of humor, extreme devotion to politics and conservative view of gay rights. Penn is at the top of his game, as is Franco as Milk’s lover. Brolin plays Milk’s assassin, Dan White.

Above all, Milk is a thought-provoking biopic of a man who never hid who he was, while gaining political power, making friends — and one fatal enemy — along the way. Milk devoted his life to supporting small neighborhoods and the gay community of the 1970s, but his voice is able to live on through this film.

Transamerica (2005)
Starring: Felicity Huffman
Kevin Zegers
Fionnula Flanagan
Transamerica is offbeat and disturbing at times, but is nevertheless a poignant film. Felicity Huffman sheds her glam girl Desperate Housewives persona to embody Bree Osborne, a transsexual on her way to becoming a woman once and for all. After rounds of treatment, therapy and lifestyle adjustments, Bree is just a week away from her sexual reassignment surgery when she receives a startling phone call. She learns she has a son, Toby (Zegers), sitting in a New York City jail, looking for Stanley Schupak — Bree’s former name.

Bree flies to NYC to bail out her son, who has dreams of becoming a porn star in Los Angeles. She offers Toby a ride cross-country, as she needs to head back to California as well. The personal struggles of a transsexual are highlighted through the film as Bree reveals her new self to her conservative parents, gets mixed up in her continuous lies to Toby and finally undergoes a vaginoplasty.

Transamerica gives quirky insight to a transsexual’s personal journey. Huffman nails the role of a quiet but confident woman who is willing to embrace both her past and future.

Brokeback Mountain (2005)
Starring: Jake Gyllenhaal
Heath Ledger
Michelle Williams
Anne Hathaway
Oh, the film that launched a thousand gay cowboy fantasies.

Ranch hand Ennis del Mar (Ledger) and rodeo cowboy Jack Twist (Gyllenhaal) meet on a shepherding job in the summer of 1963. During months of isolation in the Wyoming mountains, the pair develops a physical and emotional connection. Their summer is cut short when their boss catches a glimpse of their forbidden relationship and immediately fires them. A “one-time incident” then turns into a 20-year secret affair and a life-long love, masked by fishing trips and postcards.

The men’s marriages and separate lives fall apart with Ennis’ divorce from his wife Alma (Williams) and Jack’s wife Lureen’s (Hathaway) pushing for a career change. Ennis and Jack meet for an excursion that ends in an argument fueled by heated emotions and failed expectations, and the men unknowingly part ways for good.

This Oscar-winning film proves that the most forbidden love can also be the truest.
THE DECADE’S LGBTQ MUST-HAVES

TELEVISION

BY: DOM LYONS

Showtime’s famous lesbian drama, The L Word, centers on the lives of a group of lesbian and bisexual women in L.A. Airing from 2004 to 2009, it gained a loyal and strong fan base, and focuses on the relationships that form and break between the women and the peripheral hetero. Season One started the show off with a bang, introducing Alice (Leisha Hailey), a bisexual looking for love; Tim and Jenny (Eric Mabius and Mia Kirshner), a straight couple with a female half that becomes increasingly unsure of her heterosexuality; Bette and Tina (Jennifer Beals and Laurel Holloman), an older couple looking to have a baby through artificial insemination; Shane (Katherine Moennig), the lesbian who can and does pick up more girls than Hugh Heffner; Dana, a professional tennis player who is afraid to leave her closet; Marina (Karina Lombard), the owner of The Planet, the cafe where all the girls hang out; and Bette’s straight, alcoholic sister Kit (Pam Grier), who is trying to stay sober as she works at improving her relationship with Bette. All of their dramatically intertwining lives create a show so intricate that every episode should be watched at least twice to get the full effect. So — in a move that survivalists the world over caution against — he goes into the basement and ends up kissing Ambrosius Vallin, the big bad villain, and freeing him from an imprisonment of more than 150 years. Once freed, Ambrosius decides Kevin is his new flame and directs his unearthly efforts towards wooing a not-as-enthusiastic-about-their-love-as-he-is Kevin. Anyone who likes Supernatural and considers every second the Winchester brothers spend not making out a second wasted, then Dante’s Cove is the answer to every problem plaguing your life.

Watching the queens on RuPaul’s Drag Race has become a guilty pleasure for many. Every season the queens shower the fashion world with hilarious drama. The interactions between the ladies (pronounced “bitches” in RuPaul’s presence) serves to fill the show with a sense of realness, as if the only thing that would change if the cameras were removed is the 10 pounds they add (which the queens hide with the skill of a magician). The queens and their different styles make up the dress of the show, but the dainty frills adorning it can only be RuPaul. He glides around the queens’ workplaces and sparks the flame of rivalry in some while alternatively complimenting and reprimanding others; with every word that comes out of his mouth, whether he’s encouraging or judging them, RuPaul shows the contestants that when it comes to sass, they’ll never surpass the master. Of course, most drag shows judge contestants on more than their level of sass; it’s also important that they have amazing makeup, clothes and a lip-synching technique that would convince Simon Cowell of their stardom, and that’s what RuPaul’s Drag Race has coming out of the wazoo.

Thursday night is ’90s night in this dram-com about the relationship between three young gay Brits: Stuart Jones (Aiden Gillen), the playboy; Vince Tyler (Craig Kelly), a man looking for love without expecting to find it; and Nathan Maloney (Charlie Hunnam), Stuart’s newest young lover who made the mistake of falling for his Adonis. The pilot episode started off beautifully, with Vince in an otherwise empty yellow room, telling viewers about Babylon and that Stuart has “copped off.” Queer as Folk throws laughs at you left and right but, nestled in the center, there is something inherently human, a certain something that makes you care about the characters even as they throw themselves into the worst situations that fortune could imagine. For a shorter-than-the-American version gay soap, check this out.

SHOWTIME, HERE!, RED PRODUCTION COMPANY
The story begins with the tormented, one-sided lust that K, the novel’s male protagonist, feels for Sumire, an erratic aspiring novelist. Sumire cannot return K’s feelings, as she is stricken with similar longing for an older woman named Miu. As K tries on women like clothing to distract from his dead-end feelings toward Sumire, she too laments her sexual identity and desire for Miu. The novel paints a romantic picture of Sumire’s travels with Miu, embellished by the shared haunted pasts of the now-involved women. K serves as storyteller to the tale Sumire is unable to pen until later in the novel when she begins to discover herself through the love of a woman. Murakami is a master of crafting existential young characters and the development of their sexual and romantic awakenings. But don’t think this is anything resembling a Harlequin Romance. This modern tale of youth angst and mystery steers clear of cliché in favor of the realistic bliss and complications of love.

One of the 21st century’s great epic tales, this Pulitzer Prize-winner addresses gender identity in an extended style reminiscent of ancient Greek literature. The coming-of-age novel describes the life of Cal, an intersexed man, who travels from Detroit to San Francisco to better understand himself as a male-identified hermaphrodite. Beginning with his childhood, his family calls him “Callie” and encourages him to undergo sex reassignment surgery to live fully as a female. As he realizes he identifies as a male and is sexually attracted to women, Cal runs away from home and encounters a slew of colorful characters along the way. Drawing parallels from mythological creatures, like the Minotaur, which is half-man, half-bull, Cal expresses the struggle with his biological identity through the thoughtful use of his Greek heritage. Eugenides develops an intricate and refreshingly sensitive portrayal of a character born and raised as a female who lives his adulthood as a male in the modern world.

Rock-star biographies often share similar themes: sex, drugs, alcoholism, power chords, blonde strippers and the like. None such shallow excesses are found in the work of Patti Smith, poet and icon to the intellectual music listener. Her memoir describes the life she created in Brooklyn with former lover, Robert Mapplethorpe. A controversial yet renowned artist in his own right, Mapplethorpe came out to Smith, yet the two developed a friendship stronger than any fling they shared. As Smith struggled with homelessness and poverty, Mapplethorpe succumbed to AIDS, yet the bonds of friendship maintained a balance for each. With a shared passion for art and writing, these two poignant figures in counterculture history are illustrated through a lyrical and important tale of the love and friendship shared between a straight woman and gay man.

Adapted from the screenplay of the same name, the story follows four Mormon missionaries as they travel to Los Angeles to spread religious faith. Aaron, the most inexperienced of the trio, struggles with his closeted homosexuality and developing feelings towards his new neighbor, the openly gay “party boy,” Christian. After expressing his emotional and physical desires to Christian, Aaron returns home where he is excommunicated from his church and disowned by his parents when they catch word of his sexuality. Across the country, Christian is consumed with thoughts of Aaron and seeks to find him. His influence has taken a hold of Christian, who has begun to reevaluate not only what “love” means, but also the fragility of life. The unlikely pairing of the humble, religious Aaron with the excessive, uninhibited Christian teaches very different, but important, life lessons to each character and to the reader.
SCISSOR SISTERS  
Artist: Scissor Sisters  
Released: 2004  

This modern disco album was a widespread hit throughout the decade. With their homage to artists like the Bee Gees and Duran Duran, Scissor Sisters showcase a timeless sound for those looking to bust a move. The smash single “Take Your Mama” plays on themes of coming out of the closet and courageously brings family members along to experience the ride. “Filthy/Gorgeous,” on the other hand, is a naughty ode to a transsexual prostitute. This fun CD holds nothing back and lets its true colors shine against funky beats and catchy falsettos. Scissor Sisters is a courageous group that likes to make straight-laced listeners blush.

THE FAME  
Artist: Lady Gaga  
Released: 2008  

Like it or not, the lady some call “GodGa” has taken over the past few years with her shocking outfits, provocative lyrics and extensive radio airplay. It is hard to tell if Lady Gaga will fade away as simply a media-generated trend of the decade or live on in legend like her pop star contemporary, Madonna. Regardless, there is no denying the presence and magnitude of 2008’s The Fame. With catchy smash hits “Just Dance,” “Poker Face” and “LoveGame,” this album had the perfect formula for widespread success. Although “Bad Romance,” from the disc’s successor, The Fame Monster, may have put Lady Gaga in the public eye with her freaky sex appeal, The Fame was the perfect introduction to the starlet’s status as a pop icon. Supportive of gay rights and working with FlyLife, an LGBT marketing company, Lady Gaga has used her popularity to raise awareness of issues in the gay community.

SO JEALOUS  
Artist: Tegan and Sara  
Released: 2004  

The Canadian sisters who share this band’s namesake have become icons for a number of groups: indie kids, artists, twins, lesbians and cool-haircut admirers. These girls have a low-key groove that attracts an under-the-radar fan-base. So Jealous reached a more widespread audience in 2004 with its lively melodies and rich instrumentation. The catchy, indie pop sound of “Walking With A Ghost” carries this album with a repetitive hook so addicting, it was even covered by The White Stripes. Tegan and Sara have broadened their range of sound from folksy to ’80s pop with this disc, while still remaining loyal to their honest lyrics and quirky attitude. Tegan and Sara have earned appreciation with the public and critics alike for reaching such a large fan-base, including youngsters, as an openly gay duo. The twins were quoted as saying, “We don’t need to look like Britney Spears or act like Britney Spears to influence the Britney Spears crowd.”

THE TEACHES OF PEACHES  
Artist: Peaches  
Released: 2000  

A fruit of a different flavor, electronic powerhouse Peaches brought an edge to the new millennium with 2000’s The Teaches of Peaches. With tracks appearing in films like Mean Girls, arguably the most quoted movie of the decade, Peaches’ dark and sexy electroclash stylings have been ringing through speakers in the unlikeliest of places. With song titles like “Fuck the Pain Away” and “Suck And Go,” Peaches is completely unafraid to blur gender lines and add her voice to the male-dominated rock and roll lifestyle. Working as a producer, programmer, writer and instrumentalist on The Teaches of Peaches, this girl does it all herself and wants listeners to know it. The album’s raw sexuality and powerful craft are enough to make anyone nod their heads in appreciation. But the chunky beats and rhythmic percussion surely make anyone get their feet to the dance floor. Peaches is a fiercely special innovator in dance music and the media’s perception of gender roles. The Teaches of Peaches is an excellent introduction to this woman’s prowess.
A COMMON MISCONSEXUALITY

Chianne Jackson talks grooming with two ends of a similar spectrum

We live in a world ruled by labels defining who we are. Frequently, we cross a man who never disappoints when it comes to his attire. He wears his attitude like a style, and takes care of his hygiene. Men and women alike commend his appearance, but, in most cases, generalize who he is based on his exterior.

Metrosexuals are heterosexual males who are concerned with their appearance and enjoy a good shopping spree, according to Dictionary.com. A metrosexual generally takes a significant amount of time in the bathroom “grooming” himself before going out.

Kevin Bouknight, 19, has a strong aesthetic presence. He spends no less than 21 hours per week accomplishing a clean and precise appearance. Bouknight is dedicated to several organizations at Kent State, while majoring in human development and family studies, and he looks good doing it.

“It’s not so much that it matters to me, but I’ve been dressing myself since I was 1, and I must get dressed,” Bouknight confesses at our sit-down in the Hub.

His morning and night-out routines include, at the very least, two hours for preparation, including washing away each day with a facial cleanser. “I take care of my skin. I am very sensitive about that,” he says.

Bouknight showers twice a day, and after every shower, he deep moisturizes and thoroughly brushes his hair, which he has cut and maintained for $25 weekly. Finally, he begins the quest to find his look for whatever the occasion.

Although his time-management skills must be impeccable, his “unique and retro” style, according to acquaintance Chantel Washington, is thrifty and mixes the old with the new. Bouknight explains that he can dress to impress in threads from a thrift store and in fashions made by his close friend.

Bouknight’s keen sense of fashion can sometimes confuse people about his sexuality. “Most often people questioned my appearance because I seemed to have different style,” Bouknight explains. “I would constantly get asked, ‘Are you gay?’ And if not directly, I would hear from other people that persons came to them to question my sexuality. Moreover, I am not gay but I do have a strong interest in my fashion.”

A dandy, according to Merriam-Webster, is a man who gives exaggerated attention to personal appearance. The connotation suggests its closer meaning is to that of a gay, well-dressed man.

Randy Rininger II, 20, fits just as much into this category as he does not. He juggles two jobs, makes regular trips to the tanning salon and Student Recreation and Wellness Center, and majors in integrated language arts. He also serves in various organizations, including Delta Lambda Phi. He has to be social, and his appearance speaks before he gets the chance.

“It takes a lot of time to be comfortable with yourself,” he admits. “And as a freshman in college, I began to attract more attention.”

Because of his gregarious personality, he maintains his appearance. Compliments encourage him. However, Rininger, like Bouknight, admits that achieving this polished appearance happens naturally.

Being a dandy is commonly associated with flamboyant male fashion, as stated on La Carmina’s “History of the Dandy” blog. “I did wear red pants and a purple button-up,” Rininger says. “I did wonder, ‘Was this a little too much?’ But after a couple of minutes, I decided I don’t care what anyone else thinks.”

Preparation for school or an event takes him a maximum of 20 minutes. A 5-minute fauxhawk paired with an outfit he put together in his head the night before, and he is good to go. What he wears and how he presents himself go hand-in-hand, but aren’t the same thing. To Rininger, confidence is everything.

The sophomore says he believes looking good leads to him feeling good, which results in him having a good day. In order to maintain this positive essence, he carries body spray at all times and changes clothes twice a day.

Rininger’s closet contains clothing from Express, 21Men, H&M, GUESS, PacSun and Abercrombie & Fitch. However, his dandy ways are maneuvering his style to that of a more mature approach. “I want to be remembered as someone who took pride in how they looked,” he says.

Metrosexuality is becoming more customary as trends progress among heterosexuals, and being a dandy isn’t a practice of every gay male. In our society, judgment will be passed on those who dress well and those who don’t. But for many, it goes beyond fashion; it is a lifestyle.
10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Queer Canadian one-man band Enio

1. I used to write pseudo hip hop songs before I knew how to play an instrument. I don’t know how any of them go any more, so don’t ask.

2. My favorite group used to be En Vogue.

3. I have an accordion squeeze box that I inherited from my grandfather. It was made in 1909 in Italy and has push buttons instead of keys. It’s the only accordion I know how to play.

4. I know how to play six different instruments but have never taken a lesson in my life – other than those ridiculous music classes in high school that only really taught us that a piano is an instrument.

5. I opened for Sam Roberts, and the crowd I played for was bigger than his. It was for a Frosh Week at University of Toronto, and I was the first act to go on stage. All the new frosh students were there for my set, but over the course of four more acts before Sam Roberts came on, the crowd slowly but steadily whittled down to less than half.

6. I love to bake and have the biggest sweet tooth of anyone I know. I will bake a batch of cookies if there is nothing sweet to eat in the house, or even a cake. Because of this, and the fact that I’m no longer single and hence feel less pressure to impress members of the same sex, I’ve gained more weight than I care to admit.

7. The first time I ever played a song for my dog, he barked at me and then ran into the corner of the house and hid. It’s the worst reaction I’ve ever received by any species.

8. I have only ever written three “traditional-style” love songs in my life, on my own. … Needless to say, it’s easier for me to express when someone has fucked me over than when I have mushy feelings for them.

9. My favorite instrument to play is the piano, although I have a harder time writing songs on it than on the guitar.

10. I have only ever recorded one song in a professional studio: a cover version of my friend Caroline Brook’s song called “Slow it Down.” Every other song I’ve ever recorded has been in my bedroom, my parent’s basement or my office where I currently live.
THUS SPAKE MARGARET CHO

The comedian, actress and singer tells Raytevia Evans her current obsessions, must-haves and forthcoming album.

We’ve been fans since she made it big with 2002’s Notorious C.H.O., through the Kelly (see the winter 2011 issue of Fusion for more information) video cameos and into her bears-are-beautiful movement. Margaret Cho is the venerable Korean-American comedian, actress, writer, singer and LGBTQ icon, often breaking boundaries with her curt discussions of sexuality, politics and race. The following are her musings, as told to Fusion.

The world now knows that you’re not only a comedian, but you’re also quite talented in music. What other hidden talents do you have? What other things do people (including dedicated fans) usually not know about you?

Thanks! What people don’t know is that I am really studying to be a chef now and trying to perfect the art of Crock-Pot cooking. I am obsessed with food and have always been a real foodie, but I never have time to cook. So I am trying to make cuisine that is delicious and complex but still fits into my busy schedule. So I am all about the Crock-Pot and sous vide cooking. My dream is to be a judge on Iron Chef.

How did you become a queer icon?

I am queer, and I have been working for the community since I started performing in the ’80s. I am not sure about the icon stuff, but I am absolutely in love with being queer — all my queer friends and my political activism within the queer community.

How has being an Asian-American helped and/or hindered your career?

I get asked this, and I am never sure how to answer because I haven’t experienced it from a different racial perspective. How much are we our race? I don’t even know.

What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?

I want to be better at playing the guitar and the banjo, and I should have mastered the keytar by then.
What was your first job? What was your worst job?

My first job was being a short-order cook at my family’s snack bar in a bowling alley. My worst job was being Raggedy Ann at FAO Schwarz.

What is the weirdest thing that ever happened to you?

I was in Little Five Points in Atlanta, and my friend and I got kidnapped in a taxicab, and the cab was then pulled over by five police cars, and we were all held at gunpoint. The cab driver was not being arrested for abducting us. He was being arrested for some other weird reason that the cops thought we were involved in. It was all very strange and very alarming to have 10 guns aimed at you.

If you weren’t a comedienne/actress/recording artist, what would you be?

A veterinarian.

What’s your favorite food? Dessert?

I am partial to Italian, especially very old-fashioned Roman dishes like Roman artichokes, and my favorite Italian desserts are of the cannoli variety.

Name one of your guilty pleasures.

1. The Jersey Shore — the place and the TV show
2. True Crime books on Kindle
3. Bacon

What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned in life?

This is not going to matter in three days.

What books are you reading right now? What’s the best book you ever read?

I’m reading 1,001 Crock-Pot Recipes. Seriously. The best book I ever read … Hmm, that is a tough one. There are so many amazing books. Maybe Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace.

Who is the person who most influenced you and why?

I think my mom because she does everything — she’s funny and sings and plays guitar and really makes beautiful clothing. She’s a true artist.

If you were reading your own obituary, what would you like it to say?

“She did some cool shit.”

What is the one thing you can’t travel without?

Flosspicks, Latisse, tiny eyeliner brush for Latisse.

After becoming a successful entertainer and actress, what’s your next venture?

I would love to make more music. My new album is very Beatles-esque pop songs all about being Asian. It’s called The Yellow Album.
STRIPPERS + DJs
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Wednesdays & Fridays
9 p.m. til close

THEME PARTIES
every Saturday
with live DJs on
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SERVICE INDUSTRY nite
Monday with Ben

MONDAY–SUNDAY
4:00 p.m. til 2:30 a.m.
College ID Night every Monday

NOW SERVING FOOD
Anthony Imes and Todd Alba didn’t identify as queer until their first year in college, but, if given the knowledge they know now, both sophomores would’ve taken the time to research the LGBT environment at Kent State before they mailed in their applications.

“If I was a member of the LGBT community beforehand, I think it would’ve served well and my first year here would’ve been a little bit more enjoyable,” says Imes, a public communications major. “It would’ve been nice to know what’s different with each [university] besides getting a four-year education,” says Alba, a Spanish translation major who’s from Omaha, Neb., and sought out colleges nationwide.
As of now, there’s no easy or accurate way for students and parents to measure the LGBT-friendliness at Kent State. It’s not because there’s no resource that measures such a quality. In fact, a website has existed for the past three years, called the Campus Climate Index.

Since 2007, Campus Pride, a not-for-profit LGBTQ organization founded in 2001 that focuses on colleges and universities, has provided a website, campusclimateindex.org, to scale the progress of each university across the nation. Every year, Campus Pride distributes its assessment to the admissions offices of universities, including Kent State, says Shane Windermeyer, executive director at Campus Pride.

The reports ask each university 50 questions that range from policies, to resources for LGBT students, staff and faculty, to recruitment and retention efforts. Windermeyer says the index’s questions and weight system took three years to organize and $80,000 in Web expertise to produce.

“This isn’t a software program you can buy at Wal-Mart,” Windermeyer says. About 260 colleges and universities have returned a completed assessment to the organization. Of that number, 14 are from Ohio.

Professor Christina McVay hopes Kent State will soon be the 15th. McVay, a professor in the English and Pan-African Studies departments, is working with Kent State’s LGBT Advisory Committee to return the completed assessment by the end of May. McVay brought up the Campus Climate Index when the provost and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion appointed her as a faculty associate last semester to recruit and retain underrepresented students.

“It is such a nicely put-together site,” McVay says of campusclimateindex.org. “When I looked at that whole list of schools and found that Kent State isn’t there anywhere, I thought, darn. We need to get on there.”

McVay says she was interested in the position when one of her students, Imes, shared with her incidents of discrimination from other students in his residence hall. Imes and his boyfriend, Alba, now help McVay on various projects that interest the LGBT student population. Currently, the three are working on a

Campus Pride sends out assessments to admissions offices of universities, including Kent State, that includes 50 questions that range from policies, to resources for LGBT students, staff and faculty. About 260 colleges universities have returned a completed assessment to the organization. Of that number, 14 are from Ohio.
campaign to bring gender-neutral housing on campus.

“It’s really a closeted campus and especially in the residence halls,” Imes says.

Last semester, Dr. Alfreda Brown, the vice president for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Provost Robert Frank gave McVay the go-ahead to begin work on the Campus Climate Index assessment. When asked about the assessment in prior years, McVay says she wasn’t aware Kent State ever mailed in an assessment. Brown, as well as McVay’s supervisor, Dr. Fashaad Crawford, declined an interview for this story and asked that all questions be directed to McVay, the person working on the project.

After Campus Pride staff members review the returned assessment, they mail back a 14-page guideline of improvements to the university. However, the office of diversity, equity and inclusion plans to use the questions on the assessment as a guideline of its own. Aside from answering the questions, the LGBT Advisory Committee plans to adopt changes that meet requirements on the assessment.

Windermeyer says that last year students and parents used the website’s book-bag feature 5,000 times. The feature directly compares selected universities and allows the user to submit applicant information to a university’s recruitment office. He adds, though, that the index is not merely a tool to help LGBT-friendly universities recruit a higher number of students.

The index also allows a university to keep its assessment private and offline. Most importantly, Windermeyer says, is the index’s role to reveal how a university can better serve its LGBT population. “It’s not about having a five-star rating,” he says, “but about wanting to do better.”

“It is such a nicely put-together site,” McVay says of campusclimateindex.org. “When I looked at that whole list of schools and found that Kent State isn’t there anywhere, I thought, darn. We need to get on there.”

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My brother never fit any of the stereotypes that came along with being a gay man. He wasn’t a flamming, overly feminine guy with a fierce handbag and an attitude to match. He also didn’t portray the image of the down low “homo-thug” with sagging pants, a wife-beater and a doo-rag. He wasn’t a promiscuous heathen, nor was he some sex-crazed pedophile. He was a hard-working, dependable man who lived life to the fullest. He’s just a normal guy who just happens to be attracted to other men.

In November 2000, Eric Nesby began to experience flu-like symptoms and night sweats that progressively got worse over a period of six months. He went to the emergency room after experiencing breathing complications and chest pain consistent with what he believed to be “a bad cold.” Three days later, he slipped into a life-threatening coma that lasted almost 30 days. It was then that his doctors found that he had only two viable T cells and the rest had been destroyed by the progression of the disease. T cells are white blood cells called lymphocytes that protect the body from infection. The medical staff of University Hospital in Cleveland informed our family that once Eric’s T cell levels dropped below 200, he would develop Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and that his chances of full recovery were very slim. Eric, who has always been candid about his sexual orientation since age 18, had contracted the disease after having unprotected sex 10 years prior with a close friend.

“It was the first time that I’d ever had sex without using a condom. I trusted him,” Eric says. The relationship between the two had begun to get serious. He invited Eric over to meet his grandparents one evening and then decided to go to his room to converse and watch television. There was a strong physical attraction between them, and before long, he said one thing led to another. Using a condom was the last thing on their minds. Eric believed that if he only had the education he had today about the disease, he would have recognized the lesions on his legs and back as being a sign that there was something wrong. It was his not knowing about the signs and symptoms of AIDS that rendered him helpless in the fight against it.

Over the next five years, Eric encountered many challenges from the disease, like Cytomegalovirus retinitis, a viral inflammation of the retina of the eye. It left him blind in his left eye, the result of a detached retina. His legs and feet were stricken with neuropathy that would render him wheelchair-bound and unable to walk without severe pain. At one point, he was prescribed up to 52 pills a day, and because of the numerous amounts of medication and their side effects, he often suffers from aggravating bouts with gastritis.

He resides at St. Augustine Health Campus, a nonprofit, faith-based skilled-nursing facility founded in 1969 by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Cleveland. It provides quality long-term care, rehabilitation and assisted living for people of all ages and backgrounds. The facility, located in west Cleveland, is where Eric spends his time bringing hope to those who have lost the will to live.

“I believe that God has blessed me with my life to give hope to those who are dying,” he says. When asked what keeps him going, Eric says, “They need to know that He loves them, too.” Yet, he has traveled through every complication presented by this virus. He is now down to four HIV medications that make up his cocktail. He has been fortunate enough to restore his T cell count to above 500, leaving the virus undetectable, according to Barbara Gripshover, a doctor at the John T. Carey Special Immunology Unit at University Hospitals Case Medical Center.

“Cocktails are HIV meds that are formulated by a physician that all have to be taken together in order to reach the desired effect for the patient,” says Colleen Graham, registered nurse at University Hospitals Case Medical Center.
Saint Augustine Manor. “When taken appropriately, the viral loads will decrease, and the T cell levels will increase. If they are not taken together, they don’t work as well.”

Eric made a decision early in his diagnosis to live with this disease instead of accepting it as a death sentence, as many would undoubtedly have done. Instead, he spends his days bringing smiles and laughter to his nurses and caregivers, writing poetry and praying for the sick, all the while never giving up hope that a cure will be found to save millions of lives. This year marks 10 years Eric has been living with AIDS.

“Eric really does well for us,” Graham says. “He welcomes new residents and has even been president of the resident council,” a group of delegates that represent the residents who live in the home and solve various issues within the facility.

Eric’s prayers have even brought me through some of the toughest semesters during my education at Kent State, and continue to be an inspiration for me as I progress through the coming years. I encountered some of the most difficult classes over the past few semesters, and when I was too weak to focus mentally, it was as if he willed me through them. He pushes me to my potential and never gives up on me. Eric has been able to predict my test scores and class grades with over 80-percent accuracy, and his support has bolstered my confidence and esteem to astronomical levels. His dedication to being an encouragement to the lives of others is, indeed, self-sacrifice. Although his body may often be weak, the love and healing that he bestows to others is a powerful commodity, and one that is needed where there are those who struggle and may be suffering.

My brother may have never lived a life considered model by the norm in this society. His lifestyle may have even been called into question, but by our own standards, a hero is someone who is brave, selfless, determined and dedicated. Eric has proved these things in his character and in his actions. When asked how he felt about being my hero, he simply said, “I never set out to be a hero. I just do what needs to be done.”

His dedication to being an encouragement to the lives of others is indeed self-sacrifice. Although his body may often be weak, the love and healing that he bestows to others is a powerful commodity, and one that is needed where there are those who struggle and may be suffering.

Tyra and her brother walk down the corridor of his living facility.
Girlish boys. Boyish Girls. Boys who play dress up and girls who strip down.

In the LGBTQ community, it’s hard to escape the stereotypes that mainstream society thinks define who is gay, lesbian or bisexual. Who could forget the boys of *Will & Grace* and *Sex and the City*, who are portrayed as flamboyant, catty, fashionable and fabulous?

Even the most watched gay characters on television now, like Kurt from Fox’s *Glee* and Cameron and Mitchell on ABC’s *Modern Family*, aren’t a far stretch from the stereotype. In 2004, ABC’s *20/20* posed the question, “Can you tell who is gay?”

The network, along with a Northwestern University psychology professor, ran an experiment to test the gaydar of straight people. Five gay men and five straight men spent an hour chatting with handfuls of people. The result?

People were right 60 percent of the time, but there were many incorrect guesses, too. One of the men who was most identified as straight was actually gay. It showed that stereotypes can be oh so wrong.

The Media Awareness Network defines stereotypes as “codes that give audiences a quick, common understanding of a person or group of people.” But there’s no better way to understand people than to hear the truth directly from their own lips. So, *Fusion* asked five Kent State students to “break the code” and set the record straight, or rather, clear up some misconceptions about being LGBTQ.

**ALYSSA WHITNER / Age: 20 / Sexuality: Lesbian**

**Major:** Magazine Journalism

**Hobbies:** Outdoors, sports, tennis, swimming, softball, writing and arts and crafts

**What stereotypes have people associated you with?**

When people see me in my skinny jeans, hoops and makeup and my hair pulled back, they’re always like, “You don’t look like [a lesbian].”

**What do you think surprises people the most about you?**

People would be surprised to know that I’m Catholic. I don’t agree with everything, but I do practice many of the traditions.

**What do you say to people who stereotype those in the LGBTQ community?**

People need to open up their eyes. You’re not going to know what everyone in the LGBTQ community is like. At the end of the day, we’re all the same people; we just lay down in the bed with someone different.
GRACE LOPEZ / Age: 18 / Sexuality: Bisexual

Major: Theater and Technical Design
Hobbies: Video games, learning foreign languages, building things and computer-generated programming

What stereotypes have people associated you with?
I get called a ‘butch’ a lot. It makes me irritated. I play rugby, and there’s this association all rugby players are lesbians, but that’s not always true. I dress in boy clothes because it’s comfortable, not because I want to act like a dude. I’m girly, but I do like doing boyish things more than I like girly things. But I’m not butch.

What do you think surprises people the most about you?
That I’m gayish.

What do you say to people who stereotype those in the LGBTQ community?
You can’t judge a book by its cover.

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ANNIE O’MALLEY / Age: 36 / Sexuality: Lesbian

Major: Rehabilitation Counseling (master’s candidate)
Hobbies: Reading, writing and blogging

What stereotypes have people associated you with?
Someone told me I was not a lesbian because I did not ‘dress or act like a guy.’

What do you think surprises people the most about you?
People were surprised when I started coming out because I had always talked about guys. Coming out allowed me to come out of my shell. I was never flirtatious, but now I flirt, and it’s a lot of fun.

What do you say to people who stereotype those in the LGBTQ community?
You have to get to know people in the gay community. Being around people is the best way to learn about them. I want to write Christian devotionals for the LGBTQ community to let them know God loves them, too. I believe he wants you to be who you are.

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MATTHEW RINEAR / Age: 20 / Sexuality: Gay

Major: Russian Language and Translation
Hobbies: Video games, learning foreign languages, building things and computer-generated programming

What stereotypes have people associated you with?
When I first came out, my mom associated me with AIDS, drag queens, cross-dressing, whoredom and white trash. I dealt with it. I had the support of my friends.

What do you think surprises people the most about you?
I’m mortified by drag queens; they scare the shit out of me. Some people can tell [I’m gay]. Surprised that I like cars and driving fast. I can’t dance, but I can do the white-man shuffle. And I didn’t know who Lady Gaga was for the longest.

What do you say to people who stereotype those in the LGBTQ community?
You can’t judge a book by its cover.

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LEE MULCAHEY / Age: 19 / Sexuality: Bisexual

Major: Fashion Design
Hobbies: Tae Kwan Do, video games, drawing and knitting

What stereotypes have people associated you with?
Sometimes people think I’m queer because of my short hair, but most people don’t tend to assume.

What do you think surprises people the most about you?
I’m a small and quiet person. You wouldn’t know I was active. People don’t associate me with being bisexual because I’m quiet and nerdy.

What do you say to people who stereotype those in the LGBTQ community?
You shouldn’t judge people because you never know who’s gay and who isn’t gay. I have a friend who’s not gay, but she hits on anything that moves — you just never know.
Step inside Skullz Salon in downtown Kent and you’ll find it’s a lot like Tim Burton’s Alice in Wonderland meets the artistry of a ’50s pin-up girl. It’s sexual. It’s flamboyant. It’s wild, energetic and a little mind-warping.
Sitting in one of Skullz’ many styling chairs, I simply let my eyes wander at the artwork on the walls. Every painted mural has its own story to tell, but the art also incorporates a much larger picture: the owners’ dreams. You’re sitting in Angélique Manns and Amanda Boyd’s haven, or as they like to call it, their very own love child.

“We’re not offended by sex anymore. It’s become part of our pop culture,” Boyd says. “People see it as contemporary art, and everyone who walks through the door becomes fascinated with what they see.”

Skullz Salon sits downtown on South Water Street sandwiched between Woodsy’s Music and City Bank Antiques. It’s owned by Manns and Boyd, two of the most fun-loving and relaxed lesbians I’ve ever met. And not only are they in love with the salon, but they’re also in love with one another. Ask Manns when their anniversary is, though, and she might get it confused with the day Skullz opened. It’s a natural mistake, she says, to which both of them just laugh.

The wild artwork splashed throughout the salon is actually what strengthened the couple’s relationship. Both women recall staying up on what seemed like endless nights during the early days of Skullz to paint, organize and, most importantly, laugh.

“Oh, we’d paint, laugh, drink, scream at each other and just have a blast,” Manns says.

Though Manns helps when she can, Boyd is the true artist. Her spiky blond hair, large black-framed glasses and plaid sweater vest explain the edge she brings to the artwork. But she also has a bachelor’s degree in art from Kent State and is now working on her master’s in the same thing. Boyd says she did 99 percent of the job, and the other 1 percent is all of the other employees.

“It’s a layered effect achieved through having everyone [on staff] who paints do a little something whenever or wherever they can,” she says. “I want to make it a collaborative effort, showing different minds and different points of view.”

Boyd’s artwork, inspired by Manns’ love for French graffiti artist Miss Van, then “just kind of blows up on top of everything else,” Boyd says.

Miss Van is one of the best known painters in the graffiti scene, and her drawings depict women in many female forms, expressing various emotions. The work is colorful yet captivating, and both women agree that the energy from the graffiti is what keeps them, and all of the employees, on their toes and having fun.

• • • Striking a Balance • • •

“They’re two of the best people I’ve ever worked for,” stylist Lindsey Herold says. “They’re your friends, but when things need to get done, they get done. And I like that.”

Manns says that she not only needs Boyd’s immense help to continually revamp the place, but she also can’t manage the salon and do what she loves most — tending to her customers — without her partner’s organizational skills by her side.

“Amanda basically manages the salon,” Manns says. “Without her, a lot of things would slip. In my eyes, she’s as much of an owner here as I am.”

The two of them never leave Skullz when it’s open. They say they don’t take

“The best part is being very independent with one another, while still sharing a co-dependency in our business and relationship.”
days off unless it’s an absolute emergency, and even then, one is always at the salon. They believe that if Skullz doesn’t have the constant presence of good leadership, its staff and its customers will go crazy.

“Angelique’s reputation is everything to her,” Boyd says. “And she doesn’t want anything or anyone to ruin the name of this business.”

The wildly artistic and fun atmosphere of Skullz is only one side of the couple’s relationship. While they’re running a business together, they also go home each night to a 1927 colonial house, which they’ve remodeled to portray calm and neutral colors, and five dogs that they’ve adopted because of their love for animals. It’s this place, the complete opposite atmosphere of Skullz, they call home.

“If you walked into our house,” Boyd says, “you’d never think we were the owners.”

“But we can’t live somewhere that looks like Skullz,” Manns adds. “It’s a good place to keep up our energy for work and fun, but our home is where we can relax and wind down.”

She explains that having a home full of relaxing themes keeps them balanced, and her partner adds through laughter,

“Oh, and trust me, we need some sort of balance!”

*** On-the-job Love Affair ***

The women have been dating now for almost five years, and although they’re deeply in love, the relationship has had its challenges.

They first met at a PRIDE! Kent meeting, but Manns wasn’t interested. Her brother, who is also gay, introduced the two of them, but Manns took one look at Boyd’s dark-haired bob cut, and like the true stylist she is, said to her brother, “Uh, I don’t think this is going to work.”

The chase didn’t stop there, though. The two officially met one another again, like so many Kent State couples, at a bar in downtown Kent. Boyd remembers seeing Manns and turning to a friend to say, “Woah! Who’s that?”

“It took me …” Boyd says.

“… a while,” Manns replies.

“Yes. A while,” her partner says, laughing.

Although they now spend almost every waking minute together at work and at home, some of their fondest (and most annoying) memories of one another come from their time at the salon.

This past Valentine’s Day, they sat down to have a relaxing dinner, only to find that they had been talking about work the whole time.

Boyd recalled the incident, saying, “I just looked at Angelique and said, ‘Ugh! Can’t we talk about anything else?’”

“It’s who we are, though, and we embrace it,” Manns says, smiling.

Boyd’s fondest memory is looking back at the beginning of their relationship and the beginning of their business and thinking, “We did all of this together.”

“The best part is being very independent with one another, while still sharing a co-dependency in our business and relationship,” she adds.

“And you have better hair now than when I met you,” Manns adds, laughing.

“It’s a give and take — you win some; you lose some.”

A marriage-like ceremony might be in their near future, and if you ask Boyd, she’ll say she’s entitled to it. Her girlfriend, though, is a bit hesitant, but would still have a ceremony to show her love.

“I want one, and I’ll have one,” Boyd says, laughing.

“Even if it’s just with yourself?” Manns replies.

“Oh, yeah. I’ll Skype it if I have to.”

Left and Right: Angelique Manns (left) and Boyd share a moment in their salon. The two have been working together since Skullz opened its doors. Center: Lindsey Herold walks across the main hairstyling room within Skullz, which is after the hair removal stations, right past the bank vault and hair washing and drying parlor.
He wanted to live a simple, closed life. But soon after transitioning, he learned someone had to speak for the transgender community. Jake Nash doesn’t fill his activism with political rhetoric. He fills it with an insight into his life as an ordinary Christian man who, 13 years ago, began transitioning from Pamela to Jacob.

Jake Nash passes around his high school portrait to more than a dozen Kent State students. Back then, he went by the name Pam. Today, Nash is speaking in front of an Advanced Human Sexuality class, instructed by a friend, Professor Dianne Kerr. After briefly introducing himself and his status in the transgender community, Nash wastes no time handing the photo of Pam, a life he lived up to 13 years ago, to the first desk on his right.

Pam’s appearance, with long brown curly hair and bulky glasses, looks a bit odd to the standards of high school students these days. But back then, Pam was just another student who knew something wasn’t right, but didn’t yet identify as transgender and hadn’t ever heard of the word.

“A lot of people said I was good looking back then,” Nash tells the class. “I didn’t think I was.”

The photo passes from one student to the next. Each student glances at Pam for a few seconds and passes it to the next student without an expression of shock or disbelief. In a casual setting, the students would probably gasp at the difference between Pam and Jake’s appearance. Here though, the students are observing a panel on the transgender community. This is expected.

Accompanying Nash on the panel are two other individuals who identify as transgender: a male-to-female and a female-to-male. Nash knows both of them well, and the two panelists share sensitive and personal stories about their coming out and experiences in the transgender community. This isn’t the first time either of them have told strangers their experiences as a transgender individual, but some might not know that when you compare the two against Nash and his lacked inhibition to share anything and everything about his life. Very quickly, it becomes clear that Nash is accustomed to speaking in front of large groups of strangers.

A CLOSER LOOK AT JAKE

Nash, who is completing a master’s degree in psychology in diversity management at Cleveland State University, could pass as a typical man any day. His figure resembles the likes of most men at age 46. His torso is slimmer at the chest and jollier near the bottom. He has a full-fledged beard, and little by little his hair is receding. And like most men, Nash has no ovaries or uterus.

He didn’t grow that body. He made it happen. With the help of surgery and close to 15 years of hormonal therapy, Nash’s body morphed into the man he felt inside. He is more than a member of the transgender community, he’s a leader of it. He’s a liaison between the community and the counselors, doctors and surgeons who are vital to each transgender person’s progression of transitioning. Nash says he knows many people in the transgender community who leave behind the transgender status after they partially or fully transition their body to the opposite sex.

A decade ago, he had every intention of doing the same, but despite how well he passes as an ordinary man, Nash isn’t shy to talk about his transition. Because he is so open, he has passed a great amount of knowledge to members of both the transgender and medical communities.

“I have a story that I tell,” Nash says during one of several interviews. “Sometimes I tell it the same; sometimes I tell different aspects of the story. The more you tell it, the more you talk about it, the more comfortable you become.”

He disagrees when people ask him if life would have been better had he just been born a man. He concedes he did not live a fulfilling life prior to transitioning. He despised the way he looked and where his life was heading, but “all of those things that I went through for the first 33 years of my life made me the person I am today.”

Nash is grateful for living a good chunk of his life as a woman. It has given him insight to both genders, which most men don’t possess. For instance, one day, Nash and his wife were driving in Akron, Ohio, when they crossed a woman struggling to get back home. Feeling sorrow for the troubled woman, Nash felt it necessary to offer her a ride. But what woman is going to accept a ride from a bearded, middle-age man, he thought? Unlike most men who have lived exclusively as a male, Nash knows how it is when the roles are reversed. He’s lived it for the first 33 years of his life. Nash asked Erin, his wife, to step out of the car and ask the woman if she would like a ride to wherever she was headed. The woman accepted.

Today, Nash facilitates TransFamily meet- ings once a month at the Emmanuel Fellowship Church in Akron. TransFamily is a support group based in Cleveland and Akron that provides free information and advice to transgender individuals and their friends and family. He spends the largest portion of the meeting offering medical advice to guests. He refers his guests to doctors and counselors he knows are welcoming and familiar with the needs of transgender individuals. Nash only knows a dozen doctors and a dozen counselors in Northeast Ohio whom he would recommend to a transgender friend. It’s not easy to be on his list of recommended doctors and counselors, either. A physician can’t just tell him “I’m down with the transgender folks.” Nash needs to know if the physician’s staff,
from the receptionists to the assistants, will treat people of his community like a person. “I literally interview them as if I’m interviewing them for a job,” he says.

THE TRANSITION FROM PAM TO JAKE

Nash isn’t exaggerating when he tells people he’s lived his life as a woman and man. During puberty, he frequently denied the thought that his body was developing breasts. He refused his mom’s inquiries about buying a bra and thought he might be dying once he encountered his first period. Prior to transitioning, Nash was even married to a man for six months.

Throughout most of his life, Nash knew something was different about him. He wasn’t like most girls — he didn’t like men; he didn’t identify with girly things; and he didn’t envision himself in the body of a woman. However, the thought of changing his gender didn’t seem realistic until one evening at age 33 when he watched a Discovery Channel program titled Which Sex Am I? The program examined physical men and women who identified as the opposite gender and the lives they lived with the discrimination they faced.

“It was perfect timing because it really helped me put words to how I was feeling,” he says.

At the time, Nash was residing in New Hampshire and traveled to Connecticut to receive therapy at a gender clinic. It was there he was prescribed male hormones to begin his physical transition.

Hormones aren’t an easy step to start. At the time, he says, many therapists didn’t prescribe hormones to a patient until he or she had dressed as the opposite gender for six months. Even after that, Nash says, it is up to the therapist whether he or she thinks the patient is ready to begin hormones. He calls therapists and the medical professionals with similar duties the “gatekeepers” of the transgender community.

“They can either let people go through the gate into their transition, or they can keep the gate closed,” he says.

Even after receiving approval, Nash had concerns about taking hormones. All his life, Nash has loved music — singing it and playing it. He sang in high school and college, and after graduating, was part of a Christian band called One Accord. Together, the band released its own album. Nash says he feared that the hormones might restrain his vocal cords. Unlike estrogen for a physical male, testosterone greatly affects the voice of a woman. Nash feared his journey to transition from female to male might jeopardize his singing abilities, but ultimately, he went through with it. His vocal cords deepened, but not for the worse.

“I’m still figuring out what my vocal range is,” Nash says.

Today, he is the lead guitarist for Emmanuel Fellowship’s Praise Team, where every Sunday between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., he and other members of the congregation sing and play gospel songs. Aside from his wife and the transgender community, Emmanuel Fellowship, a nondenominational church that prides itself on accepting people of all backgrounds, is the third piece that makes up Nash’s life.

During church service, when he is not on stage playing and singing, he is sitting in the first row of the congregation, usually closest to Pastor Tee Hines. During Hines’ sermon, Nash is typically seen with his legs crossed and his head lightly shaking up and down to encourage the minister in her sermon.

On stage, Nash embraces his deeper voice, proving that he has adapted to his body’s changes.

MEETING ERIN

One week prior to beginning hormones, Nash met Erin Barr in an online Christian chat room. He contacted her for no other reason than to learn more about why she has such an exotic username as “Ojibwe.” “I started up a conversation because I thought the name was interesting,” Nash says. “All of the other [names listed in the chat room] were Christian names.” As it turns out, Ojibwe is one of the Native American nations of Erin’s background. From then after, it didn’t take long for Nash to tell Erin about his identity as a transgender man. Although Erin identifies as lesbian, the news didn’t stop her from pursuing a romantic relationship with Nash.

“I fell in love because of who Jake was, not because of his body parts,” Barr says. “People have a hard time wrapping their minds around it.” She adds that prior to Nash, some of her friends identified as transgender, too.

The biggest hurdle Barr overcame during Nash’s transition was when he returned from Montreal for his mastectomy, or top surgery, in March 2002. For years, she was accustomed to the gradual changes testosterone had on Nash’s face and body.

“The growth of the facial hair and body hair was gradual, so that gave me time to get used to it as it happened,” Barr says. “But when he finally had his top surgery, it was very visible. It was a very outward sign, and a very finite event for his transition.”

Three years after the two moved in together, they would both apply for a marriage license and start a legal battle against the state of Ohio.

Typically, Ohio doesn’t allow two people with the same gender at birth to get married because no person born in the state can change the gender on their birth certificate. Lucky for Nash, his birthplace is Massachusetts, which doesn’t apply the same rules. Despite overcoming that obstacle, however, Nash included his legal name change from Pamela to Jacob on his and Barr’s marriage application. It didn’t take long after that for Trumbull County to learn Nash’s entire history. The case went up to the Supreme Court of Ohio, and on Dec. 31, 2003, it ruled in favor of Trumbull County 2-to-1.

The case generated strong media attention, first statewide, then national and then international.

“A German news organization talked to us because they couldn’t believe a ‘free nation’ would deny a couple of the opposite gender to get married,” Nash says.

After enduring a $6,000 lawsuit — they were fortunate enough to have their lawyer, Randi Barnabee, work on the case pro bono — Erin and Nash altered their $12,000 wedding plans to a commitment ceremony.

“We did it in the hopes that another couple wouldn’t need to go through what we went through,” Nash says of their struggle in the Ohio court system.

Two years later, Nash surprised Barr with a real marriage proposal during a vacation stop in New Hampshire. The proposal surprised everyone. Not even their close friends on the trip knew about his plan.

“I asked her ‘Hey, honey. You wanna get married?’” Nash says. They got legally married Aug. 13, 2004. It was a Friday the 13th, a day with special meaning to the couple because five years before on Friday, Aug. 13, 1999, Barr drove from Warren, Ohio, to New Hampshire to start their lives together.
Aside from hormones, surgery is another large obstacle that many transgender people face.

Breast removal wasn’t the only surgery Nash underwent. In 2000, he received a total hysterectomy, in which surgeons removed his uterus and ovaries. Unlike “top” surgery, this operation was medically necessary. Prior to the operation, Nash was diagnosed with major endometriosis, a female-exclusive illness in which severe pain occurs around the pelvic area because of inflamed tissue near the uterus and ovaries. Nash’s health insurance covered the roughly estimated $12,000 surgery.

Because endometriosis is an illness that affects only women, Nash sought his hysterectomy at University Hospitals McDonald Women’s Hospital in Cleveland. At this point, Nash was about a year and a half into his hormonal therapy. Despite still having breasts, his face closely resembled a man’s, mostly due to his facial hair.

“Because of his appearance, they decided to make him the first surgery of the day,” she says. The surgery didn’t go as smoothly as hoped. During the operation, complications occurred. Because of Nash’s testosterone, surgeons found adhesions on the ovaries and uterus, his wife says.

“And so the bladder was attached to the uterus,” she says. “There was an adhesion that wrapped around the intestines from one of the ovaries. And they found several small cysts. Because of the adhesions, the surgery took longer than it would have otherwise.”

Nash was in extreme pain after the hysterectomy. He was screaming and making noises in the recovery ward.

“In the meantime, I was asking the receptionist every 15 minutes what was going on,” Barr says. She later learned doctors were sending Nash to a room to rest. When she located his designated room, “they were literally emptying out a storage room to put him in,” Barr says. “There was no call button; there was no phone; there was no visitor’s chair. They said it was a private room. And it was at the end of the hallway away from the female patients.”

Once he was secured in his “private room,” hospital personnel placed Nash on oxygen. Concerns about Nash’s condition raced through Barr’s head.

“I was angry,” she says. “I went out to the nurses’ station and said, ‘What’s going on? He is on 10 liters because they over-medicated him so severely that his breathing was erratic at best.” Barr says. When asked about the painful experience, Nash says his struggle to maintain his breath was mostly all he remembers.

After eight hours of struggling to breathe, a respiratory therapist came in to help Nash. Four days later, he was discharged from the hospital. Six hours after that, he and Barr arrived home and learned he couldn’t urinate. Nash had a bad reaction to the morphine and Demerol, Barr says. She rushed her future husband to the emergency room at a nearby hospital. The two didn’t expect how ill-prepared the emergency room would be to treat a transgender man. Nash was screaming in pain and needed a catheter to drain the urine stuck in his bladder. At this point, the couple wasn’t married, and it was

Nash calls therapists and the medical professionals with similar duties the “gatekeepers” of the trans-community. “They can either let people go through the gate into their transition, or they can keep the gate closed.”
“Some people will say they wouldn’t do what I do … They wouldn’t out themselves. But, for me, if I don’t out myself when I’m speaking to a class talking about transgender issues, then they just look at me as this other guy talking about transgender people. It doesn’t become personal. When I out myself to whomever I talk to, then it becomes personal.”

a struggle for Barr just to stay nearby Nash and inform the nurses about his condition and transgender status.

“I explained to them things weren’t going to look the way they expected it to,” she says. “They were trying to insert the catheter in places it shouldn’t be inserted.”

Meanwhile, as the nurses brought more hospital personnel to figure out how to drain the urine, Nash was in excruciating pain. He needed to pee, but couldn’t.

“You know when you have to hold it sometimes? Think of it as 100 times worse,” he recalls of the experience.

When hospital personnel finally inserted the catheter, they drained one and a half liters of urine. Lucky for Nash, it marked the end of his medical troubles.

SHARING EXPERIENCES

Hospitals today have changed greatly since 2000, the couple contend. However, if it weren’t for people like Nash and Barr willing to share the events in their lives, who knows what progress hospitals and medical professionals could manage alone.

Prior to meeting Nash, Dr. Henry Ng, the clinical director at Cleveland’s LGBT Pride Clinic and a physician at MetroHealth Medical Center, didn’t know much about the struggles transgender people in the area encounter when they meet with a doctor or are sent to the hospital emergency room.

In 2005, Ng met Nash at a health fair, where Nash spoke about the obstacles transgender people face when they work with therapists, physicians and hospital personnel.

Ng was touched by Nash’s stories and asked to learn more. It was then Nash shared with him the events following his hysterectomy.

After the health fair, Ng, who is a member of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, called hospitals around Northeast Ohio to learn what policies they have written to accommodate transgender individuals — if they had any such policy at all.

“I was really curious to learn more and made a lot of phone calls,” he says. More specifically, Ng asked each hospital spokesperson if their hospital had a policy dictating where to place a transgender person if he or she needed to stay overnight or longer.

Of the 25 hospitals Ng contacted, 22 responded. None of the hospitals had established any rooming policy concerning transgender individuals at that time. Most of the spokespeople said in the case that a transgender person needs to be assigned a bed, he or she would be given an entire room without any roommates. The explanations didn’t do much to persuade Ng. He said a no-policy solution like that could lead to conflicts during days when there are bed shortages, which, Ng adds, happens more often than rarely.

“Sometimes the whole hospital can be filled up,” he says.

Today, Ng and Nash work closely to meet the needs of members in the transgender community. “Jake has really given a stamp of approval for our services,” the doctor says of the Pride Clinic.

The Pride Clinic, located inside the McCafferty Health Center on Cleveland’s west side, provides many services to transgender people, including hormonal medical care. Ng said about 20 percent of the patients that walk in identify as transgender.

Even though the Pride Clinic is one of only a dozen clinics in the nation that specializes in a “medically underserved community,” according to its website, Ng is still learning new ways to better accommodate the transgender community. This year, Ng has begun using gender-neutral pronouns like “ze,” “zie” and “hir” to address patients that don’t identify as either gender or consider themselves gender queer.

EDUCATING OTHERS

Back at Kent State, the panel discussion moderated by Nash ends. Every student gives the three speakers a gratifying applause. It didn’t matter whether the information the panelists shared will help the students on their next exam. All of the students spoken with afterward agreed it was worth watching and listening to the panelists.

One student felt enlightened by Nash’s story and how he wasn’t quite sure about transitioning until a later age.

“That was mind-boggling to me that there can be someone along those lines who I know or [have] gone to school with that had always identified as someone different,” says Kristin Okel, a junior integrated health studies major. “I’ve never personally known anyone [who’s transgender].”

Kristin wasn’t the only person in class who never met a transgender person prior to the panel discussion. Out of the four students interviewed afterward, three, including Kristin, says meeting Nash and the other two panelists was the first contact they had with a person who they knew was transgender.

Today wasn’t the first time Nash spoke to Kent State students on campus. Since 2002, when a Trumbull County probate judge outed Nash and Barr and their legal battle to get married, Nash has learned he has a story to tell and an important one at that. He is hopeful it will be one that can change people’s perspective of an entire community.

“Some people will say they wouldn’t do what I do,” Nash says a few days after the panel discussion. “They wouldn’t out themselves. But, for me, if I don’t out myself when I’m speaking to a class talking about transgender issues, then they just look at me as this other guy talking about transgender people. It doesn’t become personal. When I out myself to whomever I talk to, then it becomes personal.”

“It becomes no longer a ‘Oh, it’s those crazy people he’s talking about.’ It’s now, ‘Oh, wait. He’s talking about himself.’ The community is a real person now.”

Editor’s Note:
University Hospitals
McDonald Women’s Hospital in Cleveland could not be reached in time for print.
Every year, the Human Rights Campaign sends surveys to 1,000 hospitals regarding policies and personnel training for the LGBT community. The surveys are voluntary, and HRC collects the data from the returned surveys to form the Healthcare Equality Index. In 2010, 19 Ohio hospitals returned the survey. Here are some of those answers concerning the care given to transgender individuals:

**ITEM A**

Does your hospital’s non-discrimination policy toward patients include “gender identity or expression” or “gender identity”? [10]

**ITEM B**

Does your hospital’s visitation policy grant same-sex couples the same visitation access as different-sex couples and next of kin? [8]

**ITEM C**

Does your hospital provide cultural competency training addressing healthcare issues relevant to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community? [1]
Gender
FUCK’d

Fuck gender. Gender is dead. All hail gender expression.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY Hannah Potes
With excerpts from Mary Ware Dennett’s
The Sex Side of Life
Every once in a while as they are growing up, but before they are old enough to really fall in love and marry and have children, boys feel a sort of stirring of the sex organs — sometimes so much so that it makes them quite uneasy and anxious for relief. The thing to do is to keep as calm as possible and keep very busy and very healthy.
Every 28 days or so a woman, from the time she is about 13 or 14 till she is about 50, has a slight flow of blood from the uterus, which is called menstruation. The reasons for this are not wholly understood, but it is supposed there is an extra supply of blood provided periodically for the growth of a baby, but when there is no baby starting to grow, the blood is not needed so it flows away …
Preparing to travel to another country can be stressful. Think about a Kent State student who studies abroad in Geneva, Switzerland. That student must live in an unfamiliar environment, switch to the Swiss franc, brush up on some basic French and adjust to different food and cultural norms. Oh, and attend classes, while seeing as much of Europe as possible. That’s another issue. Going to each different country means different hurdles. If this hypothetical student wanted to go to Italy, she would have to switch to the euro and learn a little Italian. If she wanted to go to the U.K., she would have to switch to the pound and go through customs.

Now, add being gay to that scenario. Clearly, gay people in the United States know what it’s like to be gay in this country, but it’s not possible to know what it’s like in other countries without first traveling there. Potential questions may include: Is it okay to be out? Is PDA with a significant other socially acceptable? Are there gay clubs? Is gay discrimination common? Who can offer help if necessary? Is there a way to connect with other gay travelers? The list of concerns can be long, and this is not exhaustive.

With the “pink dollar” trend, spending by the LGBT community in the U.S., being more and more noticed by the travel industry, LGBT travel is becoming commercially encouraged. However, on a personal level, the stories of two gay men wanting to visit India provide a glimpse into the challenges and rewards of gay travel.

“India is a country flourishing with culture, language and art — an absolute symphony for the eyes. Walking down any street, you’ll find it hard not to take your camera out,” Bhalla says. “The kids love being photographed, and with such beautiful smiling faces, who could resist?”
in different parts of the world tell of an experience straight travelers don’t even know of.

A bond beyond language

Jared Holt, a 22-year-old Kent State senior architecture major, studied in Florence, Italy, in 2010. When he first left the U.S., he was concerned about not having another member of the gay community there.

“For me, it was just kind of not having that outlet within people that I knew, as far as gay friends, a boyfriend, whoever,” Holt says.

However, once in Florence, he met some gay locals and became friends with them.

“I just kind of felt like I was really the only one who was able to embrace such a foreign culture on my own, by myself, and I didn’t think that I would ever recognize or dedicate the fact that I was gay as the reason of that, but it really was,” he says.

Holt describes a community that’s exclusive to gay people, and that’s how he was able to connect with some Italian people so easily.

“I just think,” he says, “as far as being gay, you already have this connection to people, whether they’re foreign, whether you know them, whether they’re a complete stranger.”

He says he often went to a gay club in Florence and would hang out with the same group of guys.

“Whether you spoke the same language or not,” he says, “you knew that you had the same connection of being gay, and it just kind of created a bond from the beginning.”

While being gay was what brought them together, Holt looks at his experiences with them as simply discovering Italian culture, in general.

“It actually led to me hanging out with a couple of them on my own, riding on the back of a Vespa — an Italian line of scooters — going to a guy’s apartment and sitting around eating biscotti and hot tea and smoking cigarettes and just Google Translating and talking and whatnot,” he says.

“It was just a big queer old time,” he recounts.

“I just felt: Wow. No one else here in my major is experiencing this right now. This is the culture, not just gay Italian, but Italian, in general.”

Even though he did have unique experiences, Holt does encourage gay travelers to be careful.

“There still is a risk of going out. You still have to have a level head about things. You can’t just say, ‘Oh, everyone’s gay. Everyone’s going to be nice. Everyone’s going to be cool.’ There are creeps out there, as there are in any club, but it’s definitely a little more crucial when you’re in a foreign country.”

Holt traveled to many international destinations beyond Italy, including Interlaken, Switzerland; Amsterdam; Munich; Athens, Greece; and Madrid and Barcelona, Spain. While in Madrid, he stayed with some friends in a hostel in the vicinity of the gay district.

“It was so neat. Right where you entered the alley, right where you went down the street, you just immediately felt that was the gay area — everyone around you, every bar, every street sign. We just browsed around and went from club to club and immediately met a handful of people.”

Two sides of the world

Gaurav Bhalla is 21 and studying at the University of Buenos Aires. He’s been across the world, having traveled to Argentina, India and parts of Europe.

His experiences of being gay in India and Argentina were completely different because of their cultures. He says, “Buenos Aires is the gay capital of South America,”
while India’s culture “is very closed about sexuality.”

The nightlife in the two countries made the cultural differences and acceptance evident to Bhalla.

“In Argentina, we have a huge, huge, huge nightlife there,” he says. “So, when I went to India, I wanted to go out and see the nightlife. Here I am coming from one of the most liberal countries and the most liberal cities I’ve ever been in, to India.”

This was made clear to him when he searched for a gay club in Mumbai with a female friend. They finally found one club that had a gay night. He says once they arrived, it was small, without much going on, and even though it was a gay night at the club, men kept approaching Bhalla and asking him when he was going to marry his female friend. He was honest and plainly told them he doesn’t like women, but they didn’t understand clearly what he meant.

Bhalla experienced India’s cultural emphasis on heterosexual marriage, and he was even laughed at for not planning to marry.

On one occasion, some men asked him if he was married. After telling them he wasn’t, they inquired as to why.

“Because I don’t like girls. I like boys,” he says.

They asked if he was gay.

“I said yes, and they all started laughing because to them it’s something incomprehensible,” he says. “It’s a foreign concept.”

Kent State’s response

The patchwork of international attitudes on LGBT people can certainly be a cause for anxiety when students studying abroad have enough on their minds with packing, learning a new language and getting ready for life outside of the U.S.

The Office of International Affairs is ready to help LGBT Kent State students who may have concerns about studying abroad through an OIA program, but doesn’t have any specific policies.

“We don’t ask sexual orientation or anything like that,” says Jessica Cohen, the marketing coordinator for OIA.

However, she says if an LGBT student were to come to OIA and ask for assistance, the office would be “more than happy to assist.”

While help is available, the jury is out on whether it’s more difficult for gay people to travel than straight people.

“When you’re traveling, you already feel like you’re such a minority,” Holt says. “If almost anything, it puts everyone on the same playing field.”

Bhalla experienced India’s cultural emphasis on heterosexual marriage, and he was even surprised to make friends with some locals like Kumar and Godson who showed him what southern hospitality is all about.

“The hostel experience is one I think everyone ought to go through. You meet such great people from all over the world and every walk of life,” Bhalla says. “This was the last week in Argentina for me and a couple of my friends so we thought we’d send ourselves off with a bang, which is easy to do any day of the week with Buenos Aires’ intense nightlife and amazing parties.”
Angela Huffman, 21, defines the term “tomboy.” The Kent State senior leads a lifestyle similar to that of her many guy friends. Whether Huffman is playing video games, partying on the weekends or simply lounging around her house, it’s clear she is most in her element when she is with the boys. “Being around guys is just more comfortable for me,” Huffman says. “When I’m around girls, I get nervous.”
What is the best part about living with all guys?

[Laughs] There is always someone around to help me push my truck out of the drive if it gets stuck, and there are always crazy shenanigans and goings-on.

What is the worst part about living with all guys?

Boys don’t like to do dishes.
Huffman discusses next year’s living arrangements with future roommates Scott and Mikey.

What’s with all the Spider-Man?

He’s the guy I would want to be. Peter Parker is a smart guy. He takes his gifts and does good things with it. Plus, Spider-Man is just badass!

Describe yourself in five words.

Oh, shit… [Laughs]… Can, ‘Oh, shit,’ be the first two? [Laughs again] Let’s come back to that one.
What are your plans for after graduation?

I want to join the Peace Corps if I can get in. If not, pick a place and move. I kind of want to live the rest of my life by the seat of my pants; or at least the next few years.

Top: Huffman says she’s been playing guitar for 10 years. Right: Huffman shares a house in Kent with five guys.
Huffman says she loves playing Call of Duty: Black Ops with her friends when she has free time.

**Where would you like to be in 10 years?**

I would like to have at least two children and just be happy, really. I’ve gotten to the point now where I just want kids, and I could care less about having a significant other.

**Who is your biggest celebrity crush?**

Natalie Portman.

**Do you have any guilty pleasures?**

High School Musical 3, Zac Efron and Harry Potter.

I would like to have at least two children and just be happy, really. I’ve gotten to the point now where I just want kids, and I could care less about having a significant other.
Fusion readers may have noticed an addition to the LGBT acronym in the winter issue: the letter “Q.” Trae Ruscin, president of PRIDE! Kent, explains that “queer” is a new addition to the “LGBT alphabet soup of identity,” but the meaning is pliable, so some believe the “Q” stands for “questioning.”

“The identification of ‘queer’ is for anyone who feels that it fits their identity,” Ruscin says. “Some straight allies identify as queer because it implies non-heteronormativity. Some LGBT people identify as queer because it feels more inclusive to them, or they use it to include the idea of dating someone who is transgender or gender variant. It is a self-identification that can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people.”

For minority groups, words are powerful. They’re the simplest way the majority identifies and understands members of the minority. In the same way that some African Americans say “nigger” to each other and some feminists say “bitch,” minority groups sometimes rebel against derogatory use of certain words by adopting them into their own vocabularies. In the LGBTQ community, words like “faggot” or “dyke” meet the standard of taking back formerly offensive or abusive words, Ruscin explains.

Each word follows its own path from its first mention to its everyday use. Etymology is the study of how words come to exist and tracks the evolution of meaning up to modern-day usage. A study of the etymology of certain slang terms for gays and lesbians allows a glimpse of the public perception of the group from the earliest times.

“I have been called a ‘fag’ before by a random person yelling it out of their car window,” Ruscin says, “But it doesn’t bother me, mostly because I try not to let a stranger’s perception of me or my sexuality affect me.”

**Etymologies of Specific Terms**

**Gay**

Most of us know that “gay” has many different meanings, but according to The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, the term came to mean “homosexual” in the U.S. in 1953. One of the earliest contexts it provides is from the 1964 text *Here Goes Kitten* by Robert Gover, which contains the line, “An’ Perry — he’s a gay — June found him layin’ on the road one night about a week ago.”

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “gay” comes from the Anglo-Norman “gai” or “gaye” and Old French and Middle French “gai” or “jai.” While its meaning has changed over time, its development as a synonym for “homosexual” probably derived from Geoffrey Chaucer, in 1405, who used the term to mean “wan- ton, lewd, lascivious.”

In 1597, the word evolved to mean “a person dedicated to social pleasures; dissolute, promiscuous, frivolous, hedonistic … uninhibited; wild, crazy; flamboyant.” Its use in 1795 actually referred to a woman who lived by prostitution, and later came to include male prostitutes, but researchers argue that the homosexual meaning was unrelated to this form.

The Online Etymology Dictionary states that “gay,” referring to “homosexual,” probably got a boost from the term “gay cat,” which was a name given to young hobos who were new on the road and were often abused by older bums, as they were considered “an inferior order of beings who begs of, and otherwise preys upon, the bum” in 1893. Further, “some accounts report certain older tramps would dominate a gay cat and employ him as a sort of slave,” and “homosexual practices are more common than rare in this group,” in 1933.

The earliest use of “gay” as “foolish, stupid, socially inappropriate or disapproved of” was in 1978. Though there’s no explicit connection between this form and “homosexual,” the term came to mean “homosexual” 25 years previous, regarding primarily male homosexuals and sometimes lesbians.

**Lesbian**

While “gay” is still debated and redefined, the derivation of “lesbian” is straightforward. Many male homosexual terms derive from French, but female homosexual terms vary more in their language of origin. “Lesbian” is a mix of Latin and Greek and gets its name from “the island of Lesbos, in the northern part of the Grecian archipelago,” according to the OED. It also refers to a mason’s rule that is made of lead and “could be bent to fit the curves of a moulding,” and thus
evolved into “a principle of judgment that is pliant and accommodating” in 1601. “Lesbian” developed its modern-day usage in 1890 after the alleged sexual interests of Sappho, the poetess of the island of Lesbos, who targeted both males and females in erotic and romantic verse.

**Faggot/Fag**

The earliest use of “faggot” was in 1300 as “a bundle of sticks, twigs or small branches of trees bound together,” often for use as fuel. The term came from the French “fagot” and is compared to the Italian “fagotto.” From the bundle of sticks, the meaning of “faggot” came to refer to the “practice of burning heretics alive.” The early phrase “to fry a faggot,” in 1555 and 200 years later, became “the embroidered figure of a faggot, which heretics who recanted were obliged to wear on their sleeve as an emblem of what they had merited.” The British understanding of “fag” as a cigarette likely developed from this burning stick meaning.

Its earliest recorded application to male homosexual slang in the U.S. was in 1914. Beatnik literature used the term “faggot” and its abbreviation “fag,” often among authors such as Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs and Gore Vidal.

The Online Etymology Dictionary states that “faggot” may have been reinforced by the Yiddish term “faygele,” meaning “homosexual” or “little bird.” It also interprets the “bundle of sticks” meaning as “something awkward that has to be carried, i.e. baggage.”

**Dyke/Dike**

The Partridge Dictionary of Slang dates the modern usage of “dyke” in the U.S. to 1931, and defines the term as “a lesbian, especially a ‘mannish,’ aggressive one; safely used by insiders, with caution by outsiders.” The derivation of the term, however, is borrowed from many different languages, including Old English, Middle Dutch, Middle Low and High German, Swedish and even Icelandic. According to the OED, the spelling of “dyke” rather than “dike” is common but not etymologically.

In Old English, “dyke” comes from “dike,” a designation of both the masculine and feminine.

In 1921, the term “bulldyker” developed, meaning to “engage in lesbian activities,” according to the Online Etymology Dictionary. The source also suggests that “dyke” could be a shortening of “morphadike,” a dialectal garbling of “hermaphrodite,” and a source from 1896 includes “dyke” as slang for “the vulva.”

**Butch/Femme**

Possibly from the Scandinavian “dragg,” the earliest mention of “drag” as “feminine attire worn by a man” dates back to 1870. It refers specifically to the clothing or attire and had no homosexual connotation at the time. The Online Etymology Dictionary states that “drag” is theater slang from 1870, regarding “the sensation of long skirts trailing on the floor” and dates “drag queen” to 1941.

Transvestite is from the German “transvestit,” with the prefix “trans,” meaning “across, over, to” and “vestire” meaning “to clothe.” Similar but not the same as “drag,” a “transvestite” is defined as “a person with an abnormal desire to wear the clothes of the opposite sex,” first cited in 1910, according to the OED. The Online Etymology Dictionary makes a connection with the French and Italian term “travesty” and cites the shortened form, “trannie,” to 1983.

**Drag/Transvestite**

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**Queer “is a self-identification that can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people.”**

— Trae Ruscin, President, PRIDE! Kent
A man removes his glasses to wipe away his tears. Others in the audience sniffle. But these are the common reactions to those across the country who view *Gen Silent*, a documentary from Emmy-winning producer and filmmaker Stu Maddux.
Maddux was in Northeast Ohio in April to show a clip from the project at the annual meeting of the Gay Community Endowment Fund. The GCEF, a permanent philanthropic fund of the Akron Community Foundation, awards money to organizations that address LGBT issues, including Fusion.

Gen Silent chronicles the growing problem of anti-LGBT discrimination in nursing homes or home care, and of bullying by health-care workers and fellow residents. The hour-long documentary follows the day-to-day lives of six elderly seniors during a year in Boston.

“For some people who see it, it really hits close to home for them,” Maddux says from California in a later phone interview. “It’s a really loving story that some of these people are going through. It is a little bit of a tear-jerker.”

The documentary was shown days before Maddux’s presentation as part of a collaboration between the University of Akron and Akron-based GCEF. Maddux’s presentation and screening were largely because of GCEF board secretary Cindy Christman, who saw the documentary at last year’s Provincetown International Film Festival.

“When I saw it, it was like the light came on,” she says. “We were thinking of having a seminar about financial investments and planning for the future. This brings people together to show this is real — there is a need that exists to establish a plan and implement training to health care employees about diversity issues.”

Maddux says LGBT seniors still remember how they were treated when they came out of the closet. They remember hearing about the beatings and police brutality that eventually led to the Stonewall riots in the summer of 1969 in New York City. They remember being ignored and stigmatized during the AIDS epidemic, formerly referred to as the gay man’s disease.

“It’s totally unfair — that’s why I wanted to do it,” Maddux says. “They’ve done so much. Can you imagine having anything worse than having been in the closet all your life and having that taste of freedom after not having it? Now they have to deny their partners of 40 years. That’s tough.”

In a clip, a hospice worker says LGBT seniors are more likely to age alone because many never had children, are not in close contact with their families and round-the-clock home health care is expensive. In addition, LGBT seniors who can no longer depend on themselves are at risk of being discriminated against, or converted to Christianity or into becoming straight, by the very people who are taking care of them.

Over the course of a year, Maddux filmed for two to three weeks at a time in Boston and worked for two to three weeks back home in Novado, Calif. He spent all of his savings, used the 100,000 or so frequent flyer miles he and his partner were saving for a round-the-world vacation and crashed on the couches of friends’ houses. But Maddux says it was worth it to tell these people’s stories.

“It’s become more than a movie,” he says. “It feels more like a movement for me to help older LGBT people. It’s the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done in my career.”

Maddux says it’s been encouraging that people who didn’t realize this was a problem see the movie and want to help. He also says working on this documentary has forced him to reexamine the life he has with his partner of seven years.

“We’re the same age, so I’m worrying about growing old and not being able to look after each other,” he says. “I don’t have a lot of people in my life. We don’t have kids; we don’t have a big family. I don’t know who would take care of us if we are both hurt.”

Christopher Hixson, GCEF Board chair, says when he saw the movie he was “freaked out” because his partner is 14 years older. Now Hixson wonders what’s going to happen as they age. “We don’t consider ourselves down the road,” Hixson says. “We can relate to these people, regardless of age. The important part of this is the conversation is just starting.”
Fag Hag Description & Characteristics:

A fag hag is a person who gives off a fun vibe. They are outspoken and cannot be shocked or scared. A fag hag is someone who can fit in and identifies with gay culture by being straight.

An accepting personality and being loud and outgoing, fag hags aren’t super girly. They may even be a little butch.
- Sara Scanes, senior visual design major

I feel like fag hags are very motherly, and they feel like they have to take care of their fags.
- Kelsey Hoover, sophomore psychology major

A fag hag plays ultimate hostess to the gays at all times.
- Hoover

Gay guys tend to understand females better. It’s just expected that you would feel that connection.
- Kelsey Kersting, freshman English major

I feel like a fag hag should be a classy bitch. They need to look presentable and be sociable to a certain extent and need to be OK with anything. [Fag Hags] need to be open minded and have very few boundaries.
- Hoover

Clothing Style

A fag hag is an ostentatious dresser. They are fashion-forward and love to look put together and appealing to gay men.

Me, personally, I dress like a lesbian a lot, but that’s just me. But [fag hags] dress well because they have their gays around them all the time, so they have to look presentable.
- Hoover

I think they’d follow the trends more than people who don’t hangout with gay guys would.
- Kersting

Attitudes

Fag Hags are typically loud, outgoing and fearless initiative takers.

I mean, they can be bitchy because gays can be bitchy. Overall, they’re nice people.
- Hoover

They seem to have pretty positive attitudes, and they like drama.
- Kersting

The definition and perception of fag hags has changed. It is a point of pride, not an insult.
- Scanes

Views on the term “Fag Hag”:

I think it’s a really harsh term just because both of the words in it are usually used as insults. It’s not a bad thing to be it, but the term implies that it would be.
- Kersting

If you represent the gays, don’t let that word hurt you.
- Scanes

I’m happy to have a lot of gay friends and don’t really care. I just wish they would find a different word for it.
- Kersting

It doesn’t really carry a specific set of characteristics. I don’t think it’s a bad representation of a person.
- Hoover

Some people find the word offensive. Depends on the person who would take it, but the mature, modern thing to do is embrace it.
- Scanes

I enjoy it. It sounds fun.
- Hoover
I don't like using that term, unless it's jokingly because it kind of puts out a bad connotation to those girls that the only friends they have are gay, and that they don't have boyfriends and just spend all their time with gay men. Because none of my friends are like that, (but) they're (seen as) stereotypical fag hags.

-Toich

It kind of varies upon my straight girlfriends. There are some who don't like the reference. To me, I don't think of anything about the term, but there are some of my friends that find it kind of derogatory. - Wakely

I just think of like an old lady in drag charging at you with a stiletto. It's not a very nice word, but it's a word that definitely applies to some women. It's not a word I use very often. - Rinear

Gay point of view:
Why do you think girls are attracted to gay males?

In general, probably because it's still a guy, but it's obviously less threatening because the guy is not going to try to get into their pants. There are fun stereotypes that go along with it. They dress you up.

-Nick Allison, junior Spanish major

I think it's more or less because gay guys and girls have similar interests, and they both connect because they like boys, and it's easier to talk to another guy about guys because guys just have guy intuition, whether they're gay or straight.

-Nick Toich, sophomore architecture major

I think it's because straight women are generally attracted to men and because we're men. We can kind of give them insight on how to approach other men.

-Matt Rinear, freshman Russian translation major

Basically, it's because most gay guys who have fag hags work as girlfriends without the drama and possibility of them stealing their guys.

-Brian Wakely, junior visual communication design major

What's your favorite thing to do with straight girls?

Just go out and have a fun time. It's always fun to get ready and take pictures before we do stuff. It's always fun to hangout and do whatever. - Toich

My favorite thing is going out, grabbing food and then just talking about what's going on in our lives. You know, all that fun stuff. - Wakely

Not shopping. Getting them to dress me when I have to go out on a date or something, or go to a club. - Rinear

Do you call girls that are your friends Fag Hags?

No, I call them respectful lady friends, but only to other guys when they ask. - Rinear

Only some of them. It depends on if they like being called a fag hag or if I'm their only gay friend or if they have a lot of gay friends. Because the term 'fag hag' more depends on if they have a lot of gay friends. - Wakely

How do you feel about the term "Fag Hag"?

I don't like using that term, unless it's jokingly because it kind of puts out a bad connotation to those girls that the only friends they have are gay, and that they don't have boyfriends and just spend all their time with gay men. Because none of my friends are like that, (but) they're (seen as) stereotypical fag hags. - Toich

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Kelsey Hoover (left), Nick Allison and Sara Scanes are a Fag Hag sandwich.
When preparing for a date, you mainly focus on:

A. Your entire appearance, everything must be perfect
B. Color coordination
C. The shoes are everything
D. Your undergarments, appropriate underwear is crucial on date nights

When you’re at the coffee shop and like always, you order:

A. Coffee, black
B. Hot chocolate
C. Cappuccino
D. Café au lait

The screensaver on your personal laptop is:

A. A picture of you and your spouse
B. A picture of your younger sister
C. A family portrait
D. A picture of your shih tzu, Mimi

Your biggest pet peeve is:

A. Tacky clothing
B. People who are not meant to wear spandex but wear it anyway
C. Polyester
D. Someone completing your Cosmo quiz before you even read it

On any given night, you would rather:

A. Go to the movies
B. Stay home on the couch
C. Go dancing

When visiting someone’s home the first thing you notice is:

A. The size of the home
B. Whether there’s good or bad lighting
C. The window dressings are awful
D. The rooms are in perfect feng shui

When greeting a close friend, you:

A. Shake hands
B. Give a hug
C. Head nod
D. Air kiss

Tally up your points:
A=0 pt, B=1 pt, C=3 pt, D=5 pt

Straight (0 pts.):
You like vaginas. Conformist!

Gay tendencies (1-14 pts.):
You do some things a little differently from the heterosexual male everyone believes you to be. For example, you’re a little more particular about your appearance: jeans and a shirt, or hoodies and sweats don’t cut it. Everything in your home or apartment has its place, and you enjoy coordinating color, in general.

When it comes to your sexuality, you may not always be so confident. You may be a little curious or confused about your sexuality. If so, it may be time you explore these curiosities to answer the questions that plague you. Doing so could find you more sexually and socially satisfied than you’ve ever been before.

Gay and loving it (15-27 pts.):
You are confident in your sexuality and your personality. You are who you are and you don’t care who has a problem with it. Besides, it’s their problem to deal with, anyway. You live life to the fullest, and you let everyone know that your private life is not their business. In the process, you break every stereotypical code society may have about gay men.

Gay and proud of it (28-35 pts.):
You kiss and tell and don’t care about the consequences. There is no doubt in your mind about your sexuality or your personality. You love who you are, and you don’t mind sharing yourself with the world. You don’t mind volunteering your opinion, even when you’re open to everything and everyone, and your happiness and confidence often make people envious.
1. No doubt, your wardrobe has to include:
   A. Mini skirts
   B. Jean shorts
   C. Flannel shirts
   D. Chuck Taylors

2. Your DVD collection was not complete without:
   A. Every season of Sex and the City
   C. Boys Don’t Cry (1999)
   D. The L Word, the complete series

3. When choosing a location for Friday’s festivities, you consider:
   A. Your favorite bar. They know you by name anyway.
   B. A place a friend recommended
   C. The new lesbian bar that just opened
   D. It doesn’t matter. After a few drinks, you can convince any woman to try anything.

4. You can’t go a day without listening to at least one song by:
   A. Carrie Underwood
   B. Prince
   C. Ani DiFranco
   D. Melissa Etheridge

5. When you wake up in the morning, your routine consists of:
   A. Shower, exfoliate, an hour of deciding on clothing, applying make up
   B. Get in a good workout, shower, go to work/school
   C. A bit of hair gel and throw on some clean clothes
   D. Wake up and head for the door. There’s a long day ahead.

6. You just returned home from a hard day’s work, and you want to change into your lazy, couch potato clothes. You decide on:
   A. A mini skirt and revealing tank top
   B. Whatever is clean
   C. Sweatpants and a shirt
   D. Baggy jeans and an old, faded T-shirt

7. It’s karaoke night, and you’ve had enough drinks to let your friends talk you into singing/embarassing yourself. Your song of choice is:
   A. “Single Ladies” — Beyonce
   B. “Unpretty” — TLC
   C. “Human Behavior” — Björk
   D. “Cold Hard Bitch” — Jet

Tally up your points: A=0 pt, B=1 pt, C=3 pt, D=5 pt

Straight (0 pts.):
You thrive on the banana. You’re a conformist!

Bicurious: (1-14 pts.):
You may be on the fence about your sexuality. You think you may be attracted to women, but you don’t exactly know what to do about it. If it’s something you want to experience and find out how you really feel, don’t be shy. Give it a try. You may find that your heteroexual life was not at all fulfilling and another woman’s arms is exactly where you belong.

Lesbian with no regrets (15-27 pts.):
No one can lower your self-esteem or make you question yourself or your sexuality. Whoever has a problem with the way you live your life, well, it seems they have their own problems on their hands. You live your life fully and by your rules. You’re open to new life experiences and perspectives, and you defy all ideas and thoughts the world has about lesbians.

Obvious Lesbian (28-35 pts.):
You are always open and confident when it comes to your sexuality and who you are, and no one in this world can convince you to conceal your huge personality. When looking for a mate, you like a challenge. The object of your desire can be straight or lesbian. Either way, you approach her with confidence and keeping in mind that you may have a chance. If she’s bicurious, you’re willing to assist her in figuring it out.
LAST THOUGHTS

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE APPEAL OF DADT

as told to KELLI FITZPATRICK

Tyasha Clarke
sophomore fashion merchandising major

“It’s about time. I think it’s enough that people are willing to fight for their country and possibly give their lives. They shouldn’t have to give up their dignity, too.”

Emmaleigh Given
junior zoology major

“I think that’s good because they’re not discriminating anymore. People don’t have to hide that they’re gay. This means more acceptance. This will get the Army more support from other organizations, and it opens it up to another range of people they can advertise to.”

Abbey Bruder
freshman nursing major

“I think it’s great they repealed the DADT policy because no one should be discriminated against or unable to fight for their country based on their sexual orientation or any other part of their being.”

Alex Rodgers
freshman nursing major

“The repeal of DADT is a great thing. We are all equal, and we are all one.”

Lauren Romick
freshman pre-accounting major

“I’m glad that they got rid of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.’ I believe that gay people have just as many rights as straight people, and we shouldn’t have been discriminatory to begin with.”

Have an idea for next issue’s Last Thoughts? Email us at kentfusion@gmail.com.
Kent State University's most diverse magazine takes an award-winning approach to cover KSU's most hard-hitting and controversial topics.
Victim Outreach Program
Provides advocacy for victims of all violent crimes.
Advocates are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Townhall II advocates provide a variety of services:

- Offer emotional support
- Educate victims on all options
- Provide 911 compatible cell phones
- Provide new deadbolt lock kits to change your locks
- Go with you to police station to make police report
- Provide support during the legal process
- Assist in obtaining a protection order
- Provide helpful information and referrals
- Ensure victims are treated fairly and with respect
- Provide support during forensic medical exams
- Assist in filing victim compensation forms

24 HR HELPLINE
330.678.HELP (4357)
1.866.449.8518

CONSENT IS SEXY
TOWNHALL

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• PROVIDE 911 COMPATIBLE CELL PHONES
• PROVIDE NEW DEADBOLT LOCK KITS TO CHANGE YOUR LOCKS
• GO WITH YOU TO POLICE STATION TO MAKE POLICE REPORT
• PROVIDE SUPPORT DURING THE LEGAL PROCESS
• ASSIST IN OBTAINING A PROTECTION ORDER
• PROVIDE HELPFUL INFORMATION AND REFERRALS
• ENSURE VICTIMS ARE TREATED FAIRLY AND WITH RESPECT
• PROVIDE SUPPORT DURING FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMS
• ASSIST IN FILING VICTIM COMPENSATION FORMS

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